

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
ARIZONA  
TUCSON FIELD OFFICE**

**EA #: AZ-420-2005-028**

**Project Name:** Public Use Restriction in the Saginaw Hill Area, Pima County Arizona

**BLM Contact Person:** Linda Marianito

**Legal Description and Map Name:**

Public land administered by the BLM in southwest Tucson, in the vicinity of Valencia Avenue and Mark Road, Pima County, Arizona. The general location is T. 15 S., R. 12 E., Sections 11 SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , SE $\frac{1}{4}$  SE $\frac{1}{4}$  NE $\frac{1}{4}$  of the Gila and Salt River Principal Meridian. The area is covered by the Cat Mountain 7.5' USGS quadrangle.

**I. INTRODUCTION**

**Background:**

Saginaw Hill is part of the Amole Mining District where gold, silver, and base metals were mined in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The legacy of this mining is a landscape with many abandoned mine features such as mine shafts and mining wastes. BLM is engaged in a CERCLA cleanup action that is addressing the waste dumps, slag, and tailings.

**The Need for the Proposal:**

Current regulations and management designations allow public use of BLM-administered lands in the Saginaw Hill area. The affected lands contain substances that compromise public health and safety, including waste piles containing hazardous levels of both arsenic and lead. Public use in the affected areas occurs for a variety of recreational activities, exposing visitors to the physical hazards and hazardous substances associated with potentially harmful effects. Public health and safety hazards will continue in these areas unless immediate management action is taken. The restriction prohibiting public entry and use within the affected areas will help mitigate public health and safety threats.

Under the authority of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, BLM is compelled to take any reasonable and prudent action to alleviate a threat to the public.

**Conformance with Land Use Plan:**

The proposed action is subject to the *Phoenix Resource Management Plan (RMP)*, approved September 1989. This proposed action has been reviewed to determine if it conforms with the land use plan terms and conditions as required by 43 CFR 1610.5, BLM MS 1617.3. This action is authorized under the authority of 43CFR8364.1.

**Relationship to Statutes, Regulations or Other Plans or Policies:**

The BLM decision only authorizes action on BLM land. Actions on non-BLM land (National Forest, State Trust land, private land) are subject to the agency or private landowners' permission. The use restriction prohibiting public entry and use within the affected area will help mitigate public health and safety threats. The Federal Register Notice (attached) is an essential method of officially notifying the public and other agencies of our intent to restrict all public use year-round in the area.

## II. THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

### **Description of the Proposed Action:**

The proposed action is to restrict all public use on a year-round basis on 20 acres of public lands in the Saginaw Hill area administered by the Bureau of Land Management, Tucson Field Office (see attached Federal Register Notice). Existing management designations established in the Phoenix RMP and Final EIS, dated September 1989, remain unchanged. Unless otherwise authorized, no person shall enter or remain in the restricted area. Persons who are exempt from the restriction include: Any federal, State, or local officers engaged in fire, emergency or law enforcement activities; BLM employees engaged in official duties; and persons specifically authorized by the BLM to enter the restricted area. The area affected by this action will be posted with appropriate regulatory signs and/or physical barriers. The use restriction shall be effective immediately upon publication in the Federal Register, and shall remain in effect until rescinded or modified by the Authorized Officer.

### **No Action Alternative:**

The public lands designation would remain in their current state.

## III. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES:

**Critical Elements:** The following critical elements are not affected by the proposed action or alternatives because they do not occur in the proposed use area, or because of the nature of the proposed action: ACECs, Air Quality, Floodplain, Wetlands/Riparian Zones, Native American Religious Concerns, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Prime Farm Lands, Wilderness, National Energy Policy

**Threatened and Endangered Species:** The area is habitat for the Lesser long-nosed bat and the Cactus ferruginous pygmy owl. The area contains Category 3 Desert Tortoise habitat.

**Impacts of the Proposed Action:** Impacts were analyzed for lesser long nosed bats, cactus ferruginous pygmy owl, pima pineapple cactus and desert tortoise habitat. Closing the area to public use will prevent people from disturbing habitat.

A survey found no Lesser long-nosed bats occupying the mine shafts on site and that the shafts are not suitable habitat for bats therefore no impacts to the Lesser long-nosed bat are expected.

Saginaw hill is not critical habitat nor is it suitable habitat for Cactus ferruginous pygmy owl.

A survey found no Pima pineapple cactus in the project area.

**Impacts of the No Action Alternative:** The no action alternative would have no impact on the Lesser long-nosed bat, Pima pineapple cactus, Cactus ferruginous pygmy owl, or Desert tortoise.

**Cultural Resources:** Saginaw Hill is an old mining area that was active from 1895 to the 1950's. There are historic retaining walls and footings and waste piles from this period.

**Impacts of the Proposed Action:** Impacts from the closure to public use will further protect these structures.

**Impacts of the No Action Alternative:** None.

**Wastes, Hazardous or Solid:** Saginaw Hill is heavily impacted by illegal solid waste dumping.

**Impacts of the Proposed Action:** Closing the area from people will eliminate this problem.

**Impacts of the No Action Alternative:** None.

**Water Quality, Drinking or Ground:** Ground water occurs between 100 and 200 ft below the surface. Existing mine shafts were filled recently to prevent the direct dumping of wastes into the subsurface, reducing the threat of groundwater contamination due to illegal dumping.

**Impacts of the Proposed Action:** Closing the area to public use will prevent the direct dumping of wastes into the subsurface, reducing the threat of groundwater contamination due to illegal dumping.

**Impacts of the No Action Alternative:** The mine shafts and area would remain open, creating an attractive nuisance allowing any contaminants dumped on the surface to more readily reach groundwater.

**Noxious Weeds:** Saginaw hill is relatively weed-free.

**Impacts of the Proposed Action:** Closing the area will continue to protect the area from spreading of noxious weeds.

**Impacts of the No Action Alternative:** No impacts to noxious weed control.

**Environmental Justice:** The project area is adjacent to middle - lower income, minority neighborhood. Across the highway from the project site is the Pascua Yaqui Indian Reservation.

**Impacts of the Proposed Action:** The project will remove a public safety hazard.

**Impacts of the No Action Alternative:** A hazard to public safety would remain adjacent to a lower income, minority neighborhood.

**Cumulative Impacts:**

**Cumulative Impacts of the Proposed Action:** Other projects on site includes filling abandoned mine shafts in an ongoing activity throughout the region, particularly in urban areas where public safety is a greater concern. Fencing the most unsafe places in the area was completed recently. Together with this closure, these projects will remove these hazards from the public lands.

**Cumulative Impacts of the No Action Alternative:** These mine shafts and other hazards would remain a part of the backlog of mine reclamation activities and remain a threat to public safety.

**Compliance and Area Monitoring:** No compliance or monitoring is anticipated after this action is completed.

**PREPARERS**

Linda Marianito, Planning and Environmental Coordinator  
Bill Auby, TFO Geologist and HazMat Coordinator

**Persons and Agencies Consulted:**

TFO BLM NEPA Team